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## WHAT IS THE ESSENCE OF ALL BEAUTY?

### A DEFINITION

By F. WELLINGTON RUCKSTUHL

NEXT to What Is Good? the most serious question of the age is—What Is Beauty? Because, strange as it may appear to the unreflecting, on the proper answering of that question depends the Character of our future civilization.

When we contemplate Nature it suggests to us that Beauty is the vestment and expression of the Creator; that He made the pursuit of the Beautiful the Supreme Law of the Universe; that every insect, shrub and even crystal, senses and obeys that law and makes itself and environment beautiful; and that undeveloped or degenerate men alone violate the law.

Be that as it may, nothing is more amazing than the anarchy in the World of Art with regard to the meaning of the word Beautiful.

And the principal cause is—the Metaphysician!

The Metaphysician is either the greatest blessing or the greatest curse on earth. When he engages in the most exhaustive of labors—common-sense Thinking, otherwise called Inductive Reasoning, and never publishes as Truth a mere hypothesis until he can prove it and so becomes a torch-bearer for humanity—then he is a Creative Power. But when he indulges in fantastic guessing, otherwise known as Deductive Ruminating and, with an insolent assumption of authority—in mystic, esoteric jargon—publishes as truths a lot of skirt-dance speculation, and so allures mankind to rush into a morass of uncertainty and fear-compelling darkness, in which men quarrel and run over each other like frightened ants when their hill is upset—then he becomes a destructive force.

Real thinking of the investigative kind, by which a man aims to penetrate into the innermost meaning of things, is the most difficult and dangerous human function. Because—like Blondin walking a tightrope over Niagara—should the thinker ever lose his balance and fall away from common sense he will be precipitated into the abyss of error and chaos.

Bacon already testified to the evil work of some metaphysicians when he said: "Philosophy has made no progress in a thousand years, because philosophers have wasted their time in wrangling over the meaning of terms," ending in "Words, words, words!"—as Hamlet said.

But, sad to say, no matter how absurd or destructive of human happiness their systems may be: if they are only dressed up in some pretentious, brilliant, *mystic* garb, they will find some money-mucking bookseller to scatter them abroad for lucre; just as any degenerate picture, if painted

with blatant brilliancy, will find a degenerate art-dealer to inflict it upon the public as being, if not beautiful, at least "so interesting." hateful word—how many crimes in Art have been committed in thy name!

As a sample of how a metaphysician can go astray Plato said: "Beauty is variety in unity," a childish definition. Because by variety in unity we also obtain the Ugly. And we cannot define beauty and ugliness by one definition.

The causes of the confusion in this matter are three: First, lack of knowledge; second, slipshod thinking, talking and writing; third, dishonest talking and writing in order to condone, or bolster up, some sort of fraud in the World of Art.

The public must be told that, as every merchant in order to push the sale of his wares, must be more or less of a self-advertiser, and so degenerates easily into a charlatan, in the same way every eager and get-quick-notorious-and-rich artist who cares more for present profit than for the love of his fellows is usually more or less of a charlatan advertiser. Hence it is important to reflect over Tennyson's remark:

"That a lie which is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies;  
That a lie which is all a lie may be met and fought with  
outright;  
But a lie which is part a truth is a harder matter to fight."

For, since the world is governed by slogans, a half-lie is the most dangerous of maxims. Example: Rodin, in order to condone those of his sculptures which are radically ugly, said: "Nature is always beautiful." This is a half-lie. It is contradicted by his quondam friend Whistler: "That Nature is always right, is an assertion, artistically, untrue. Nature is very rarely right, to such an extent even, that it might almost be said that Nature is usually wrong."

This is also a half-lie, and absorbed from Baudelaire, the prophet of the Artificial in art, and also used by Whistler to defend those of his works which are merely artificial trifles.

The truth is: everything in Nature is beautiful to us in Pattern and Line—when it is a *perfect* thing of its Type; when it is imperfect or maimed or decaying it is not beautiful and often is very Ugly.

The frequency with which "Interesting" is confounded with Beautiful is amazing. It never occurs to some slipshod thinkers that a decaying old man or woman may be highly "interesting," even very lovely, without being at all beautiful, and may—

be very ugly. It is also astonishing how many will call a thing beautiful simply because it is—new.

Beauty does not mean Interesting, nor Variety, nor Art, nor Novelty. It means all these and something more.

Plato, in his Dialogue of "Hippias Major," makes Socrates ask Hippias: "What is Beauty? Is it a reality or an appearance? What is the essence of all those things, each diverse from the other, which we call beautiful?"

Let us try to answer this question and, using the common-sense inductive method, build up from the bottom of things:

When one contemplates Nature one would say—the Creator has established a cosmic urge and ordered it to provide, for the entertainment of men, all kinds of Variety. And to ensure this variety, there were established first: "The Law of the Continuity of Effects" to preserve the type of all things; and then: "The Law of Differentiation" for the sake of variety within the type.

The result is that the mass of men in each Race are of one Type, which we call Normal, with but little variation.

By the side of this normal type we have some Abnormal variations. But when these vary too greatly they die, and so the general type is preserved.

Hence we are concerned only with the great stream of normal human beings, which moves on in a broad path, fringed on either side by a smaller stream of the *undeveloped*, and on the other side by a small stream of the *over-developed*, both destined to disappear.

Practically speaking, when a human being is born he is made up of a Body, a Mind, a Soul and an Ego—each of these being merely germs, capable of great development. This is allegorical, of course. No psychologist knows *exactly* how our intellectual and spiritual processes are carried on, and none ever will know—with mathematical certainty. At birth the body is the most advanced and the only one of the germs capable of perceiving and subconsciously apperceiving anything—and through the Senses.

Later, when the mind perceives and apperceives, and the soul intuitions and feels, and the ego is able to judge the value of what the body senses, the mind perceives and the soul feels, then the entire man, working in unison—Creates, using as material the stored-up experiences of his senses.

Therefore, avoiding all hair-splitting psychology, as I said in my article of last month on "What Is Art?" I claim that practically speaking what takes place in each human organism is this: The Ego sits enthroned, as it were, in a chamber, and is surrounded by three other chambers, occupied by what I call Minister Physical, Minister Intellectual and Minister Spiritual; these Ministers present to the Ego from time to time long or short Trains of Sensations, Trains of Thoughts and Trains of Emotions—to be judged as of value or no value to the whole organism by the Ego.

That which gives pleasure or pain to the body by reflex action gives pleasure and pain to the Mind, Soul and Ego.

We do not Live when we are Motionless and Emotionless in sleep—we simply Exist. We begin to live only when we are awake and our faculties are *agitated* and our bodies put in motion—by the im-

pact upon us of our environment. That is to say: the Ego loves movement of, and in, the body, mind and soul of some kind, but preferably Agreeable *forward* movement. That is the root of all Progress. We will reconsider movement later.

There are Three Categories of things outside of man in Nature—Objective, Semi-objective and Subjective. Objective things are such as have Form, which can be seen by the eye; Semi-objective things are such as can be partly seen by the eye and by the mind—like Poetry, or can be seen partly by the eye and be heard by the ear—such as Music; and Subjective things are such as can be seen only by the mind—such as Thoughts.

The main reason why thinkers of the past floundered about in a bog of metaphysical verbiage when trying to define and analyze Beauty is: that they tried to define three different things in a single definition—objective, semi-objective and subjective Beauty—which is impossible. Because:

Objective Beauty appeals principally to the Eyes and its primary effects are upon the eyes; semi-objective Beauty, such as poetry or music, appeals only partly to the eyes and partly to the Ears; subjective beauty appeals to the Mind alone.

But, while it is impossible to find one definition that will define all kinds of beauty, it is possible to show, as Plato surmised, that there is one *essence* that is characteristic of and underlies all beauty whatsoever. Let us find this essence.

When we speak of Beauty we most always mean Objective Beauty. That is why Emerson said: "If eyes were made for seeing, then beauty hath its own excuse for being." Tolstoi in "What Is Art?" says: Lord Kaimes (1762) limited the objects which are beautiful to those which appeal to our Sense of Sight. What appeals to us through the ears may be agreeable or delightful, but it is not—Beautiful." Tolstoi also says: "Dugald Stuart (1810) in an eclectic spirit affirms that the meaning of the word Beauty, instead of being restricted in conformity with any particular system, should continue to be the generic word for expressing every quality which, in the world of Nature or Art, contributes to render them agreeable to—the Eye." And Tolstoi says further: "In Russian, by the word *krasota* (beauty) we mean only that which pleases the Sight. And, though, latterly, people have begun to speak of an 'ugly deed' or of 'beautiful music,' it is not good Russian. In Russian a deed may be kind or good, unkind or bad; but there can be no such thing as 'beautiful' or 'ugly' music."

I could quote many more, from Plato down, to show that beauty is a matter that fundamentally concerns—the Eyes.

Every object in Nature or Art throws off—projects towards us—Rays of Light. As all objects have different colors these rays of light are also varied in color.

These rays of light eternally fall upon the eyes with a ceaseless PATTERNING—like hail upon a roof.

It is the everlasting pattering upon the eyes of variously colored rays of light which is the very first *basic* element of all Objective Beauty.

Our eyes are eternally in movement when we are not asleep. These movements of our eyes are governed by six muscles attached to each of our eyeballs—two above, two below and one on each side.

Monotony of movement of any muscle of the body brings pain to that muscle. So, if we move our eyes up and down, continually, for only a few seconds, we will feel pain in our eyes—on account of the Monotony of the movement, and the repeated Jerkings at the end of each movement: because these produce a *strain* on the eyeballs. Even the holding of the eye riveted to one spot for a short while will give us pain in the eyes on account of the strain on the muscles of the eye.

All Nature is dominated by Lines—not color.

This had never been denied until the Romantic school proclaimed the supremacy of Color over Line. It was a false gospel, but appealed to those who could not draw and those who hungered for "something new." Defended with clever casuistry by the commercial artists and critics it mislead the unwary until one excessivist chirped: "The public must be told that Color is the Alpha and Omega of art!"

The stupidity of that statement is so grotesque that, as Beaumarchais said: "We must laugh at it in order not to weep." For, that color is secondary in art is proven by the fact that we derive, not quite, but almost as much pleasure from a steel engraving of any picture as we do from the picture itself, that we prefer sculpture and architecture without color, and that in poetry and music, the highest of all the arts, color is not used at all. The truth is:

Man's entire intellectual and spiritual development has been dominated—not by color, but by the Omnipresence and Tyranny of lines in Nature. What does a sea captain mean when he says of his ship: "She has beautiful lines!"? He means the *contour* of the ship—the Outside Edge of the Form—its *Pattern*.

There is not a single line in a great cumulus cloud. But it has a Contour, by which it is *silhouetted* against the blue sky. In other words, it has a PATTERN.

Besides that, it is *interspersed* with lesser contours of the lesser cloud forms. These show contours and patterns of contours in ever varying variety. It is this endless variety of contours of patterns and of lines which is the second *basic* element of all Objective Beauty.

Our eyes are forced to follow the lines or patterns of every object in Nature, whether they wish or not. They have no choice in the matter. They cannot escape the tyranny of Nature's lines.

Now, supposing a man should be born blind, he would be living only physically, and that is the tragedy of being born blind. Then, suppose a blind man should be put to sleep, alone, in a spherical room, without corners or lines, painted all white and devoid of all objects; and then suppose we could, by a miracle, make him see during the night without his being conscious of it. When he awoke and opened his eyes for the first time he would be so astonished on seeing the Light, that he would be to the highest degree agitated and *emotioned* with delight.

This falling of light upon the eyes is, I repeat, the *primal* element of all objective beauty. This must not be forgotten.

Should the blind man now be allowed to remain alone for a long time in this spherical, white, lineless, spotless room, seeing nothing but light, his delight would soon leave him, because he would feel

he was not much better off than when he was blind and saw only darkness, because all he saw now would only be white instead of black. And if nothing happened to appear on the spherical wall of white, he would fall back into the same sad intellectual stupor he was in before—because of the Unchanged Monotony of the white color, which at first gave him such an emotion of delight; and, should nothing at all ever happen, he would gradually wilt and die—because eternal monotony means death.

But suppose him lost in thought, sitting and gazing at a given spot of that white wall, and that there should suddenly appear a black but straight horizontal line of about five feet long, the surprise again would be so great as to give him another emotion of delight, different from the first. But if he saw nothing else, he would be *forced* to run his eye over that straight line,

Fig. 1

from right to left and back again, eternally over the same line. This would soon disgust him, because he would feel pain from the strain on the muscles of his eyes. Because, every time his eyes reached the ends of the line, they would experience a *jerk* as they were shuttlecocked back and forth. Hence he would soon hate that short, cut-off line.

Supposing the straight line to be replaced by a square line or pattern: Fig. 2, of say two feet square. The man's eyes would be compelled to *spin* around that four-cornered pattern and *receive a jolt* in his eyes in each corner. This would soon give him pain in the eyes and disgust him.

Moreover, this square tends to hold the eye and soul *imprisoned*, and we dislike being held prisoner. We instinctively love all *forward* progressive Motion. Hence we love racing and all speeding.

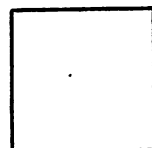


Fig. 2

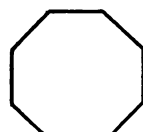


Fig. 3



Fig. 5

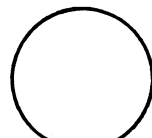


Fig. 4

For the same reason we do not like such patterns as the Octagon, Fig. 3, or the Circle, Fig. 4, or the Ellipse, Fig. 5, or any other imprisoning lines or patterns *when* they are of a *certain* size, and unrelieved and *unvaried* by other lines—inside of the patterns, because they also hold us spinning around in a circle. Of course, when these patterns are very small, like dots, they do not weary our eyes. It is only when they are of a certain size. We love a certain amount only of spinning about—when this spinning

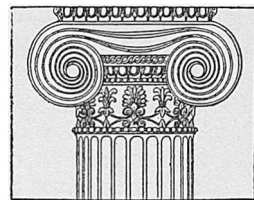


Fig. 6

is in a forward direction. Therefore we love a certain amount of the Spiral—the basis of all Graceful Beauty. See Fig. 6, the most gracefully Beautiful capital ever created. We like this kind of a spiral

line because it has a beginning and an ending—a forward movement and an outward Ejecting thrust

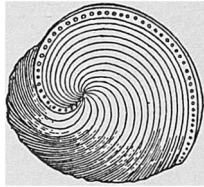


Fig. 7

—at the end of the line. Hence we love a ram's head with horns. But when the spiral has an Inward thrust, and so holds us spinning around the centre, eternally digging in, as in Fig. 7, we do not like it because—it

holds the eye bound to *one spot*;

this creates a strain and we dislike all strains. It is the forward or upward moving spiral that we love—Fig. 8. So much for disagreeable lines. And let us now consider agreeable lines:

Supposing there should appear on the blind man's spherical wall a zigzag line, Fig. 9. The man would find in this line or Pattern a certain physical enjoyment, mixed with a certain sense of humor. Why? Because, while the zigzag line would Jolt the eyes, the jolting would be *varied*, and we enjoy variety of movement; and, I repeat, we enjoy all movement that is *forward*. And the sense of humor would result first, from the *disorder* of the questionable zigzag movement of the line or pattern—all *disorder* and discord being Mirth-compelling. Because God is Order, and perfect order is Sublime and Awe-inspiring. Per contra, Dis-order is Comic and Mirth-inspiring.



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

Moreover, and this is fundamental, Forward *repetitive* presentation of lines or of spots or of sounds is the very basis of all MELODY. No melody without repetitive sounds or spots or lines.

We enjoy all melody, however simple, because of the physical enjoyment resulting from our *feeling alive*—because of our being agitated, then put in motion. First, in *forward* movement and then in agreeably *repetitive* movement and then in *varied* movement. It is purely sensuous enjoyment. See Fig. 10. Here we see a cornice of a Greek temple.

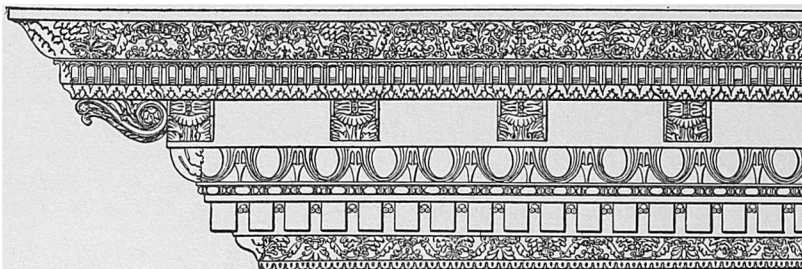


Fig. 10.

Note the various kinds of *repetitive* ornament. From each one a ray of light is reflected and projected, which reaches and patters upon our eyes like the sounds from a piano. This pattering of rays of light on our eyes is, I repeat, the *first* basic element of all beauty in all objective works of art, as the running of the scales on a piano is the basic element of all Beauty in all semi-objective art, such as music and poetry.

It is the *melody* in the repetitive lines of ornament

which makes it agreeable in spite of the fact that angles jerk the muscles of our eyes.

This suggests that the more forward moving and repetitive and varied—hence melodious—a line of spots, forms, sounds or words is, the more we enjoy that line—be it in Poetry, Music, Architecture, Painting, Sculpture or Landscape Gardening.

We experience a still higher enjoyment from the contemplation of a Greek fret, Fig. 11, when it is



Fig. 11

not *too wide*, and the squares not large. Because, first: while we are jerked by the angles of the lines, these jolts are neutralized by the variety and *forwardness* of the movement; and second: our *mirth*, caused by the jolts of the angles, is succeeded by a feeling of rudimentary *delight*—because of our perception of the reasoned-out *order* in the pattern; we see it is not accidental, like the zigzag line, but Designed and very cleverly so. But above all, because the line is more easily *followed* and Melodious than the zigzag line, Fig. 9.

Our enjoyment of anything in Nature and Art depends not only upon its Pattern, but also on its Size and *proportion* to our eye. Example: A Greek fret as above, one inch wide, will give us a certain amount of delight because its melody will not be neutralized by any perceivable jerkings of the muscles of the eyes by the angles of the squares because these are *small*, and the eyes take in many of them at *one glance*—hence glide over the angles; but, make that fret wider—without making our eyes larger in proportion—the amount of delight will at once be lessened; make it *too wide* and it will become a source of pain because each square and



Fig. 12

angle will be large enough to *noticeably* jerk the muscles of our eye, and too much. Hence Proportion is a most important element in all Beauty, but an element we cannot notice now.

Supposing now there appeared on the walls of the blind man's room a *rhythmic*, wavy serpentine line with an *undulatory* movement, as in Fig. 12. The man would at once have a feeling of pleasure in his eyes. Because first: the sinuous line or pattern is *easy to follow*—on account of the absence of all angles, hence, absence of jerks and jolts; second: because we enjoy all forward, undulatory movement; and third and above all, because of the rhythmic repetition of the *waves* in the line which CRADLES THE EYES.

We instinctively enjoy being Cradled, because we were cradled before we were born; then, in our mother's arms and then in our cradles. Moreover all Nature, the heavenly bodies, the seasons, the weather, civilization are governed by rhythmic, cradling *wave-motion* and lines of progression. In fact Nature abhors the straight line, even more

the rectangle, always avoids them when possible and eternally seeks the *curve*. In all Creation man alone violates this cosmic law—in his more or less ugly art. Hence the gentle, shockless repetition of the *wave movement* gives us a distinct physical delight. But above all, because such a line is still more *melodious*. In other words, undulatory cradle-like movement is the basis of all Graceful beauty and gives us Delight.

Supposing now there appeared on the cell-wall of the blind man two Perpendicular lines, Fig. 13, he would feel a LIFTING movement. Then suppose these lines should meet and form a Pyramid, Fig. 14,

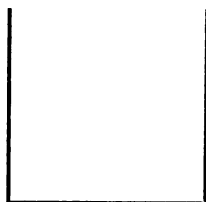


Fig. 13

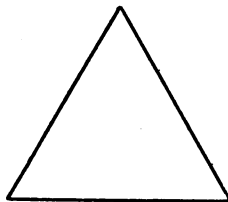


Fig. 14

say six feet tall. The man would at once experience a stronger Lifting movement; because, while two perpendicular lines already lift the eyes in rapid Upward movement, when these two lines meet and become a PYRAMID, the following by the eyes of these two lines from the base of the pyramid to the top increasingly pushes the eyes aloft and flings the sight into the infinite; and while we enjoy simple forward movement, and still more undulatory cradling movement, there is nothing we enjoy quite so much as being *lifted*—when we apprehend no *danger* in the process. Hence the intense fascination of going up in a balloon, of mounting in an aeroplane and of climbing alpine heights; of looking at skyrockets, the moon and evening star—they lift us. All children love being gently lifted off the ground, even dogs love it. In fact the lifting-power of anything in life and Nature, from a man to a mountain, is its most *precious power or quality*. Why do we love to be lifted? Because we are so organized. Why? We do not know. Is it the eternal beckoning of the Creator—lifting us to look at Him and His love of the beautiful?

Finally, supposing there should appear on the wall of the blind man a line or pattern composed of all the varied elements I have spoken of—of the Angular, of the Serpentine and Pyramidal, Fig. 15, the



Fig. 15

man would be lifted to the highest emotion of Delight. Why? Because here he would find a *combination* of lines offering the most varied elements of melody of line, united in a *proportioned HARMONY* of line.

Now these statements are not opinions. They are physical facts and govern all normal mankind, and the few abnormals do not count.

These facts at once destroy the foolish dictum "Beauty is relative." Beauty is not relative—it is Absolute.

*Taste* is relative. Why? Because here again

Nature demands, and has implanted in each of us, a hunger for Variety, of which I will speak later.

I will now define Objective Beauty by answering the question of Socrates thus:—THE ESSENCE OF ALL BEAUTY, WHICH WE PREDICATE OF OBJECTIVE THINGS IN NATURE OR ART, IS —A CERTAIN MELODY, PRODUCED IN US BY THE PATTERNING UPON OUR EYES OF VARIOUSLY COLORED RAYS OF LIGHT INTERSPERSED WITH VARIOUSLY AGREEABLE PATTERNS OF LINES, THE FOLLOWING OF WHICH, BY OUR EYES, VARIOUSLY STIRS OUR EMOTIONS.

That is to say—Melody is the fundamental *essence* of all Beauty. No melody, no beauty!

Both in Nature and Art there are Three Categories of Beauty—first: Picturesque Beauty; second: Graceful Beauty; third: Sublime Beauty.

Responding to these three categories of Beauty are three categories of Emotion. We experience many different kinds and degrees of emotion, physical, intellectual and spiritual—low and high emotions.

The Highest emotions are those which Lift us—fling us the farthest away from ourselves and the commonplace facts and things of life.

These Highest emotions may be divided into three categories—MIRTH, DELIGHT, AWE—which we feel in various degrees of intensity.

Picturesque Beauty is that in which *angular* lines predominate—accompanied by a certain amount of *disorder*, Fig. 16, page 93. As our eyes are jostled about among the angular forms of this scene on the Danube and the mind notes the slight disorder, there is aroused in us a certain melody of line, disorder, color, etc., of a quality that stirs our emotion of MIRTH. Hence the emotion of mirth is a corollary of Picturesque Beauty. This element of *disorder* in the picturesque must not be forgotten. Nature is order. Hence, I repeat, all supreme order is sublime and awe-inspiring. Per contra—all disorder is comic and mirth-inspiring. We do not exactly laugh over this scene, it is not mirthful enough for that; but, with a budding smile and slightly closing eyes, we say: "Isn't it charming!" This mirth-provoking composition could easily be exaggerated into a laugh-provoking composition—by making the squares and angles much larger, and so grotesque.

Mirth, being one of the three highest categories

of emotion—because lifting us away from ourselves and the commonplace drudgery of our daily lives, up towards the Creator, is therefore a spiritual emotion. Hence it is one of the most precious things in life. Therefore a clean, funny story told anywhere, or a fine comedy played in a theatre, should be studied and supported at all hazards by the public interested in a higher life and art.

Graceful Beauty is that in which *serpentine* lines predominate—accompanied by Logic and Order, Fig. 17, page 93. As our eyes follow the graceful, serpentine lines of this picture, and are Cradled about in



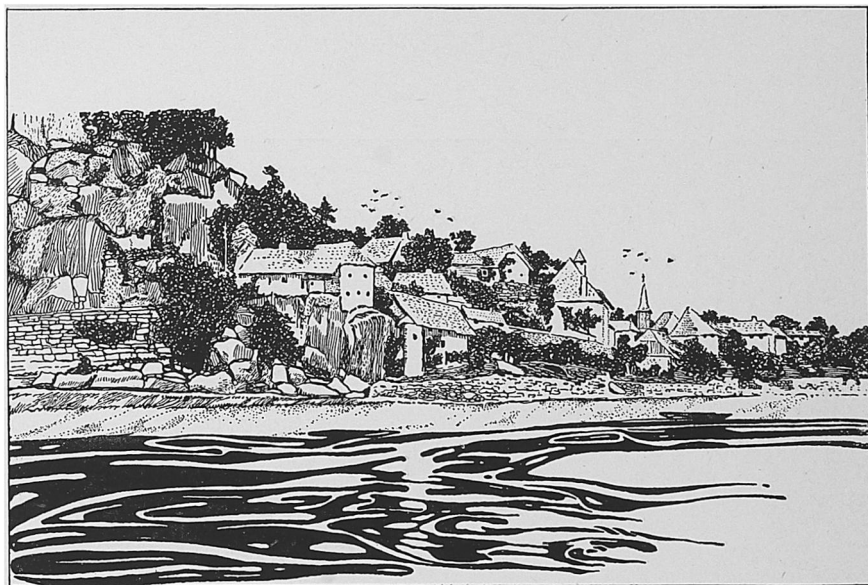


FIG. 16. AN EXAMPLE OF *Picturesque* BEAUTY, OF ANGULAR LINES PLUS DISORDER  
See page 92

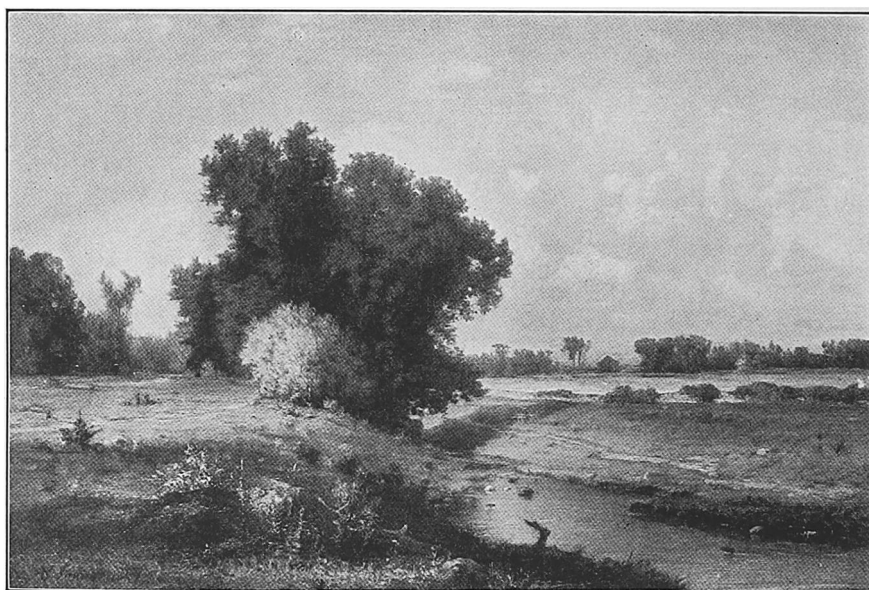


FIG. 17. AN EXAMPLE OF *Graceful* BEAUTY, OF SERPENTINE LINES PLUS ORDER  
See page 92

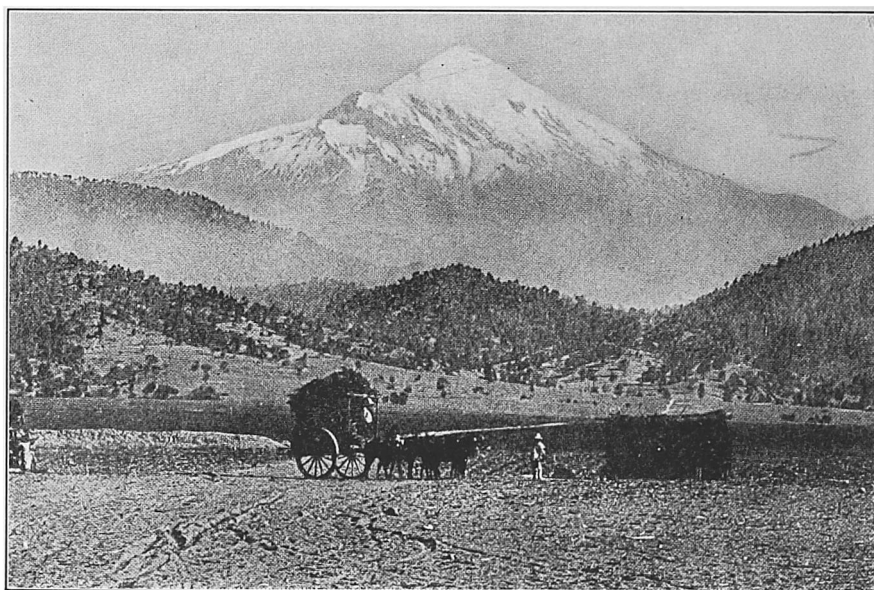


FIG. 18. AN EXAMPLE OF *Sublime* BEAUTY, OF PYRAMIDAL LINES PLUS ORDER  
See page 95



*By Claude Lorraine*

THE MOST GRACEFULLY BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPE IN THE WORLD

FIG. 19. See page 95



the *undulatory* and varied *curves* of the pattern, the cradling of which gives us a variety of shockless, easy, rippling movement which pleases the eyes and then our soul, it fills us with a still higher emotion than mirth, an emotion I call DELIGHT. This delight is enhanced by the absence of all disorder. Delight is also a spiritual, because lifting emotion, and higher than mirth only, because it lifts us farther away from the commonplaces of life towards the Creator. Moreover the savant composition, and the proportioning of the whole into a *harmonious* order, please our intellectual hunger for logic.

Sublime Beauty is that in which *pyramidal* lines predominate, Fig. 20, page 97. No one can appreciate the wonderful lifting power of the Great Pyramid until he has stood at evening on the roof of the Mena House at the foot of the pyramid when the sun gives a rosy tinge to the majestic pile. Nor can one then avoid feeling an emotion I call AWE, a higher emotion than Delight only, because it lifts us still farther away from the earth-earthly towards the infinite. This is not simply because of its size or sunset color, but because of its outside lines converging to a point and then rapidly forcing the eyes and mind along the ever-diminishing lines to the apex and—beyond. This, I repeat, lifts and flings the eyes into infinite space, and so rouses in us an emotion of awe, the highest we can feel, because of the awe-inspiring uncertainty and MYSTERY of the beyond towards that Creator with whom the Soul and Ego ever long to be united, the atheist to the contrary notwithstanding.

This is true of all normal men. As an evidence of the abnormality of some men: I once sat at a table in front of Sheppard's Hotel in Cairo. Near by sat a family of four Americans. Father looked bored. Approached another man, and: "Hello, Bill?" "Hello, old man!"

"Well, well, I never expected to see you here! How comes it?"

"Well, I just had to give in finally and come here to see these damned Ruins!"

The only sublime thing he knew of was his angular, smoke-spitting Pittsburgh factories! It is this *lifting* and upward projecting power that makes such a mountain as Orizaba so awe-inspiring. Fig. 18, page 93.

It is this lifting power of the Pyramidal which invests every object that is pyramidalized with that noble character we call Monumental.

If we now combine a certain quantity of all the elements of the Picturesque, Graceful and Sublime in one composition, and proportion them into a Melodious harmony, we have the most ecstasizing arrangement or pattern of beautiful lines possible Fig. 19, page 94.

Here we have Claude Lorraine's "Landscape," judged by Turner and most other critics as the most skilful composition or all-round beautiful landscape in the world. And in this there are *angular* lines—to *jostle* the eye and arouse our *mirth*; *serpentine* lines—to *cradle* the eyes and give us *delight*; and *pyramidal* forms to *lift* the eye and arouse our emotion of *awe*. These lines are all arranged with such perfect proportion into such a *harmony* that we call this picture Sublime. Added to this is a delicious color-scheme. So that this whole work throws us into such an ecstasy of delight as to force some persons to tears, the first time they see the picture.

If then we notice that the *technique* of the "painting" is so perfect, its *atmosphere* so marvelously rendered as to bathe the whole in a flood of shimmering light, the demands of our mind for skill and sufficiency of truth are so well satisfied—that our criticism is disarmed, and we instinctively and instantly abandon ourselves to the spiritual enjoyment of this foretaste of Elysium!

But in Art, to obtain the best results, viz.: a Harmony capable of stirring our highest emotions, nothing must be done to *excess*. Example: Del Sarto in his "Charity," Fig. 21, page 97, has not only made one pyramid of his group, but three in one—making four. It is so *evident* that we notice the pyramidalization too much. This is again shown by the picture of "The Descent from the Cross" by Vincenzo, Fig. 22, page 97, in which we see two *ladders* so evidently used because he had heard of the power of the pyramid to *lift* the soul that he overdid it. His work is a picture of two ladders, with accessories. But Rubens, who was a great composer, and also used two ladders in his "Descent from the Cross" Fig. 23, page 98, *veiled* these so skilfully that we do not *notice* them. We do not notice the pyramidalization of the picture but we *feel* it, and so our mind is not forced to ask, as in Vincenzo's picture "Why so much ladder and pyramid?" And therefore we are spiritually *free* to be highly and *quickly* emotioned—because of the absence in our mind of all mental speculation. For every Work of Art will fail to, quickly, create an emotional state of the soul: in ratio of the amount of intellectual speculation it arouses—before we are emotioned; and if our emotions are not aroused quickly on the first impact upon us of the work, they will never be aroused afterward, however much the intellect may admire it—as time goes on. But the Ego is always more in search of spiritual emotion than of intellectual emotion, because spiritual Awe is higher than intellectual Delight. This must never be forgotten. This is why all talk of "intellectualizing our emotions" is childish.

In this picture by Rubens, one of the four greatest altar-pieces on earth, we see a marvelous *pattern* of a great *lifting* pyramidal mass *interspersed* with various graceful *cradling* lines, sending forth variously colored rays of *light* which, *pattering* upon our eyes, and again *through* our eyes upon our *mind* and *soul*, these are *jostled*, then *cradled*, but, principally, *lifted*.

Moreover, and this is very important, he not only pyramidalized his mass of figures but he *curved*—*domed*—the top of his pyramidal mass. The reason why the Dome of St. Peter's is more awe-inspiring even than the Pyramids is: because the pyramidal mass is *domed* by exquisite *curves*. Therefore the always-critical mind, instantly seeing here an *order* and perfection of *arrangement* and *technical* execution, and a satisfying adequacy and appropriateness of *expression* on the faces and in each detail, the mind and soul are free to abandon themselves to the physical, intellectual, above all spiritual *lifting* power of this wonderfully *melodious* telling of a sublime story, and we are instantly emotioned by this grand harmony into rapture and awe! Of course, only once—the first time we see it—not afterwards. Because, alas! "familiarity breeds contempt"—even of the highest.

This is strictly true only for the normal majority

of those who lived in the epoch for which this picture was painted and in which the Bible stories were generally believed, or of those who still have faith in the Bible and the mission of Christ. Because to-day there are many laymen and artists who call all religious pictures "junk" and hate the very sight of them. These of course, being prejudiced, are incompetent judges.

We must never forget that as there are various *degrees* of primary colors—the Red, Blue and Yellow, so there are various *degrees* of primary categories of lifting emotion—Mirth, Delight and Awe, for which we use various terms from smiling to rapture. So much for *objective* things that we call Beautiful.

Now, what is true of objective things is true also of semi-objective Music: Melody is the essence of all "beautiful" music. Angular, jostling trains of melody Amuse or charm us; serpentine, cradling trains of melody Delight us; pyramidal, lifting trains of melody Awe us.

There is much so-called music of to-day which is not music at all, it is nothing but organized noise, jarring to the nerves, disgusting to the mind and revolting to the soul. It is utterly devoid of the easy, shockless, undulatory movement and of the proportion necessary to create a melodious harmony. This is no doubt because "modernistic" musicians, like "modernistic" painters, feel that they cannot go beyond the classic, melodist-musicians of the past, and so they have conjured up scientific "musical problems" which they must solve; and the modernistic painters have fished out of nothingness scientific "color problems," with the solution of which they bore mankind, until "technique" and "virtuosity" have taken the place of melody and music. And in music—as well as in painting—because the public knows nothing about the technical tricks of musical composition and cares little, however much they may interest "musical artists"—the modernistic musicians, like the modernistic painters, must needs howl: "The blockhead public knows nothing about musical art!" As if the solution of scientific problems in sound and color alone make Art!

But the fact is, there is a lot of degenerates in the field of music as well as in the field of the other arts, who do not yet know that they are decadents, and that "novelty" is not originality; that what is intellectually "interesting" to the mind in science has little place in Art. Because, while it may interest the mind, it can never emotion the soul; and what is clever or novel is not necessarily Beautiful and is often distressingly Ugly.

What is true of music is true of poetry—such as is not to be acted on the stage. No poetry will ever be called beautiful which lacks the easy, shock-less, undulatory, *cradling*, rhythmic, well-ordered, balanced and *lifting* movement of lines and of words. The Vers-Librists may protest against this until black in the face, it will not avail them! The very constitution of our entire organism is eternally against them. Their stuff may be "interesting" scientifically, as "intellectualized-emotion"; but, as sure as oil and water will eternally reject each other, so the soul will eternally ward off the coldly intellectual; and, however interesting to the observing mind of the psychologist "intellectualized emotion" may be, the soul will have none of it—because all

the soul has any use for is truly spiritual emotion. And in this the Ego will forever sustain the soul, since, in the last analysis and by a fiat of Nature, the soul—the "Minister Spiritual," as I have said—is and will remain the favorite and Prime Minister of the Ego.

Therefore the "novelty" cranks as well as crooks among Critics and Artists in the World of Art who, in our spiritual life, wish to eject the Soul from its supremacy and replace it by the Intellect, for the sake of novelty and because of the atrophy of their imaginations; and who aim to substitute cold Intellectuality for warm Emotion in Art and try, by all sorts of charlatan tricks and cuttle-fish methods, to befog and to mislead the public in order to unload their degenerate art, are making out of themselves nothing but donkeys at whom the next generation will staringly wonder with a boisterous ha-ha!

Space limit prevents a discussion of all the different degrees of different kinds of emotions. But it must be remembered that Wonder is not Awe. Wonder is an intellectual and Negative emotion, giving us—like surprise—neither pleasure nor pain. We wonder, to an equal degree daily, over the telephone, but it is a cold, mental emotion. Whereas the awe we feel in face of the Pyramids at sunset is a varying but Positive emotion, lifting some persons to a tear-compelling awe.

Abstract thought being entirely subjective, it is a fundamental error to call any mere thought Beautiful, no matter how original and great. Face to face with Le Verrier's conception that, because of the variation in the orbit of Uranus, there must be a planet beyond, one which could be found by mathematics, we may say: "It is a sublimely beautiful thought!" But this would be a wrong use of language, because we cannot SEE thought, except in the mind. We can call it an astonishing, great, noble thought, but not a beautiful thought. In fact, slipshod adjectivizing, like slipshod thinking, is one of the vices of our mental processes and very common.

Nevertheless there is a slight justification for calling a thought Picturesque—because of its jolting angularity and amusing disorder; or graceful, because of its soothing, cradling, delight-giving quality; or sublime, because of its lifting and awe-inspiring grandeur. In this subjective sense, then, the same law: that Melody is the Essence of all Beauty and of all kinds of Beauty, may be applied to subjective Thought.

I would like to know which bunco-metaphysic-juggler first strove to astonish the gadabouts in aesthetics with the notion: "All beauty is relative!"—an utterly absurd idea. But it was the cranks and crooks in the World of Art who instantly adopted this as a slogan—to defend their artistic tergiversations. Those art crooks and crooked critics, when they invent a new art-fad and then, in order to "work it," invent, as Tolstoi said, a new and cryptic æsthetic theory to square with and defend as gospel their new fad, always hark back to this fustian of the "Relativity of Beauty." And just as for some generations the childish æstheticians confounded beauty with art, so our art-crooks to-day slyly confound beauty with *Taste*; and, since taste is really relative, and the carps in the World of Art are too lazy to think, they swallow this plausible bait.

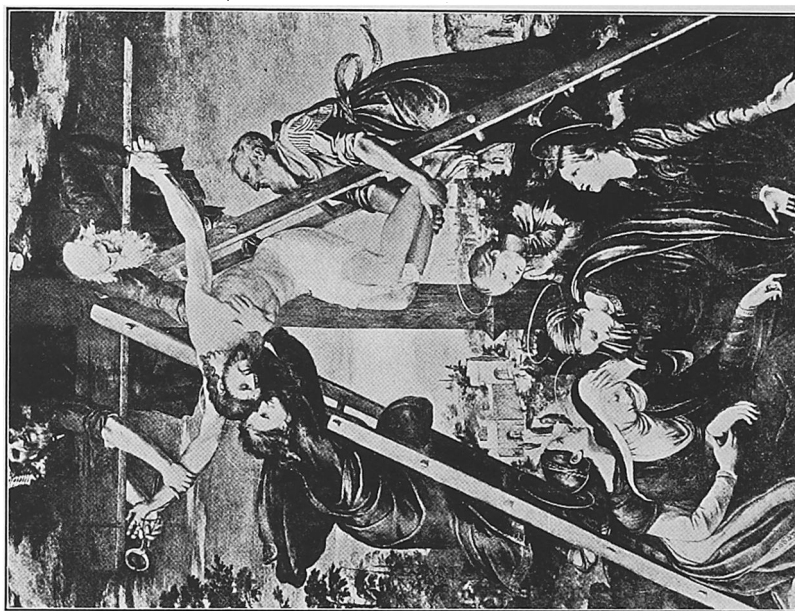


FIG. 22. "DESCENT FROM THE CROSS" BY VICENZO, AN  
EXAMPLE OF ABSURD PYRAMIDALIZATION  
*See page 95*



FIG. 21. "CHARITY" BY DEL SARTO, AN EXAMPLE OF TOO  
EVIDENT PYRAMIDALIZATION  
*See page 95*

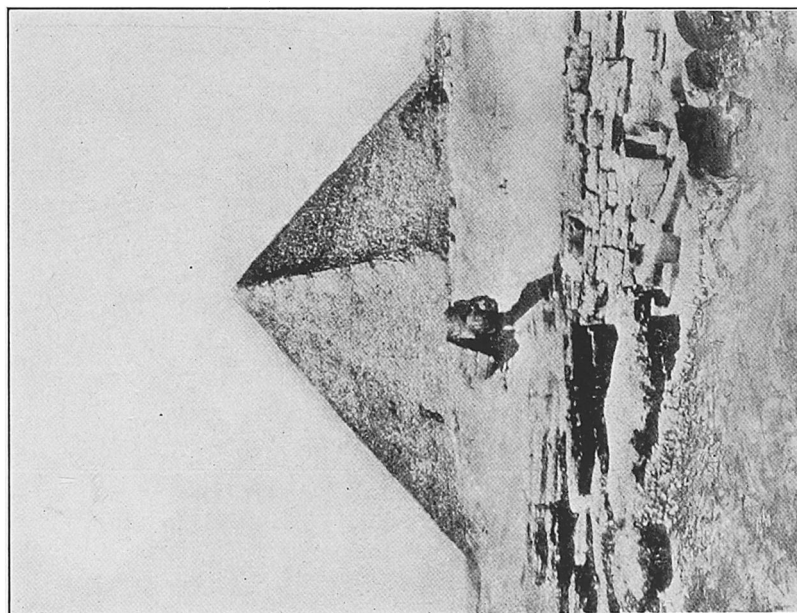
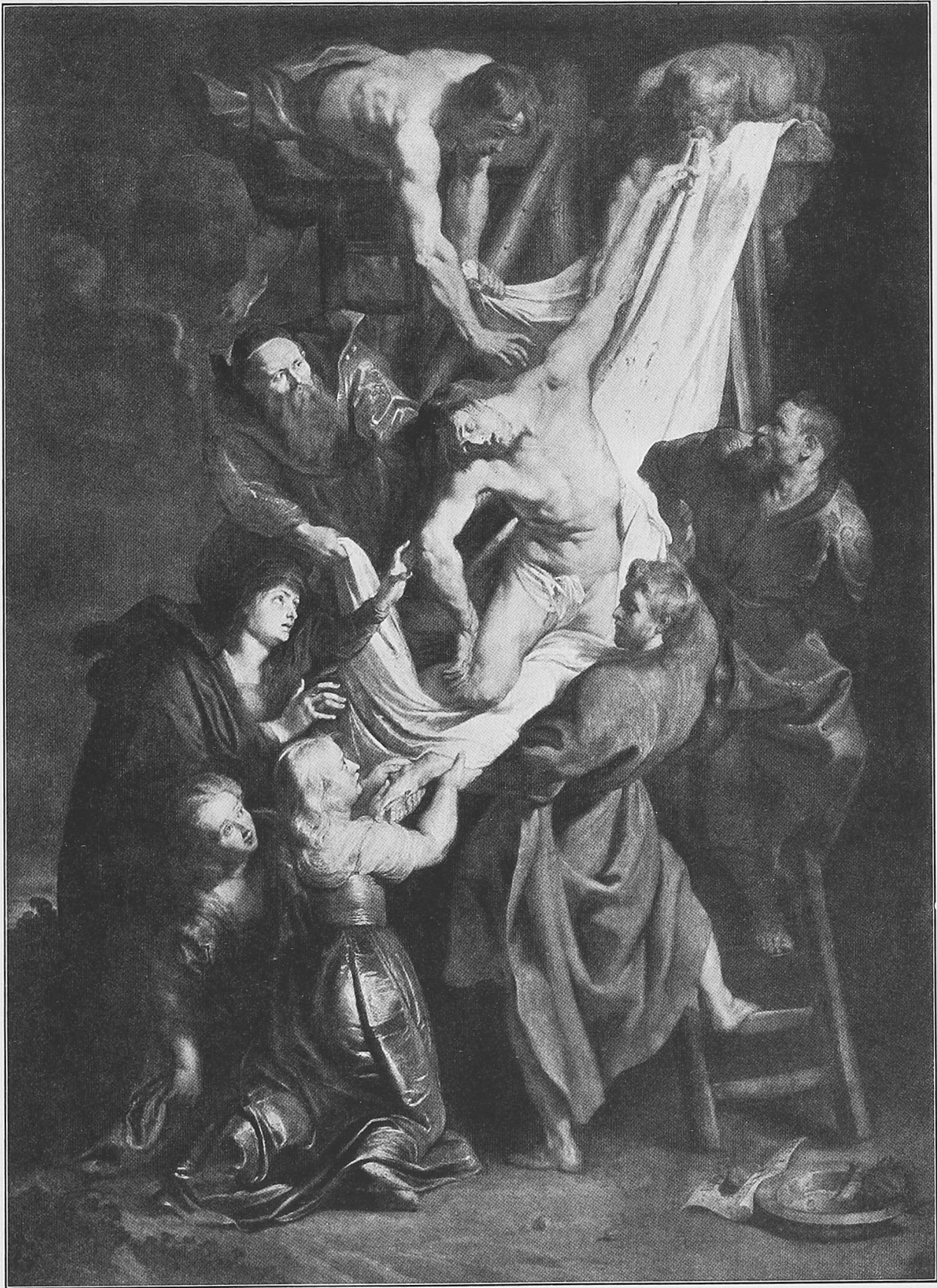


FIG. 20. THE GREAT PYRAMID OF EGYPT  
*See page 95*



**"THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS" BY RUBENS**  
An Example of Sublime Beauty



I repeat—there is no such thing as “relative beauty.” Beauty is Absolute. It is taste—or the *appreciation* of beauty—which is relative.

No one was ever heard to say that the “Venus de Medici” is not beautiful. But as a matter of taste and for ethical reasons, some have said she is dangerous or immoral—because they do not believe in the nude in art—not knowing that when a nude is chaste and spiritual, hence Delight-giving, it is Moral—because pure delight is lifting and whatever lifts us is moral.

But even Hindoos, Chinese and Japanese will say the Venus is beautiful, and they will also say the “Venus de Milo” is beautiful. But then, when it comes to choosing a woman resembling one or the other for a wife—then taste comes in as a factor. That is, between a blonde “Venus de Milo” and a brunette “Venus de Milo,” a blonde man would, instinctively, prefer the brunette. For, as Emerson says: “Therefore the brown will marry the grey and the grey will marry the brown”—for biological reasons.

Recently a plain woman in self-defense in the presence of her husband said: “Nonsense! Beauty in a woman is all a matter of taste!” She finally was forced to admit that not the Beauty but the *charm* of a woman is a matter of taste. It had never occurred to her that all her life she had confounded charm with beauty, because she was a slipshod thinker and had found some plain women charming—like herself.

I once had a friend who was engaged to marry a girl with a white skin and beautiful hands. He asked me if I did not think her beautiful. I said: “No! She has a weak chin-less, snub-nosed and really ugly face.” He replied: “Well, beauty is a matter of taste!” But in three weeks he had broken the engagement; and later confessed he had been hypnotized by the girl’s physical charms, had never reasoned about beauty, knew nothing about its profound importance and had imbibed the notion that a white skin and beautiful hands were more important than a beautifully constructed head. Later he thanked heaven for his enlightenment and married a girl with a beautiful head but indifferent hands. The laws of beauty had not changed, had not been a matter of taste, but his point of view and notions as to what is the supreme beauty in a woman had been a matter of taste, and these had changed.

Madame Récamier was of such exquisite beauty that when she appeared most other women paled. Yet Napoleon hated her. Why? Because he had unfortunately married the retroussé-nosed, only physically charming, weak Josephine, and he feared the political power of the Récamier. He knew what evil the Pompadour and Madame de Maintenon had done with the power of their beauty. Ugly women through jealous fear and in self-defense often decry some world beauty with: “Hm! I don’t see why you men call her beautiful, I think she lacks charm!” while aching in secret to possess her beauty. It is true that some perfectly beautiful women do lack “charm” but rarely.

No one was ever heard to say that the Yosemite Valley with its wonderfully lifting beauty is not sublime. Though few would care to live there always—as a matter of taste.

Moreover, every nation has by instinct the same ideas as to what is beautiful in Nature. Example:

Whenever a Hindoo, Japanese or Chinese aims to represent a Goddess of Beauty, does he make a head having the characteristic hook nose of the Hindoo, the high cheek bones of the Jap or the oblique eyes of the Chinese? No! Examine the representations of their Goddesses of Beauty which their most cultured men think are the finest, and you will find they *approach* the type of the Greek head of the “Venus de Milo.” Why? Because, as Shakespeare said, “One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.”

I once visited with a lady a Japanese Village installed in London. A score of Japanese women were there, most of them ugly—to our eyes. But there was one so spiritually beautiful, recalling so much the “Sistine Madonna” of Raphael, that one could see she was easily the favorite of all the Japanese men and women. This was not surprising to ourselves. Both of us fell in love with her and have never forgotten her. This sympathetic meeting of the East and the West on the same level of spiritual emotionability convinced me that true Beauty is not relative but absolute. Moreover did any Occidental ever deny that white-capped Fujiyama and its environs are sublimely beautiful? And do not the Japanese worship it as divinely beautiful?

The vast majority of mankind, be they Japanese or Hindoo, African or Caucasian, will vote the statue of the “Venus de Medici” as the most gracefully beautiful statue of antiquity. The few who dissent are simply abnormal and do not count. And this beauty is not a matter of Color, but of Form, of Line and Construction.

The reason is that beauty is *primarily* a physical matter, our calling anything beautiful depending primarily on the degree of physical delight or ecstasy which can be aroused in us by the *melody* which is produced in our eyes—and afterwards reflexly in our minds and souls—through the eyes of all normal people being forced to follow the melody-arousing Lines of a work of art or of Nature, in which man or God has, by subtle composition, established a melodious harmony as fixed as Mathematics, and eternally affecting the nerves of all normal people in the same manner.

This Tyranny of Lines in Nature or Art is Absolute. Therefore all beauty is absolute.

Beauty does not change. The *degrees* of our *appreciation* of beauty vary and change. And so, as long as we live on the physical plane we will lean more toward physical beauty; when we become more spiritual we will lean more toward spiritual beauty—both being, at bottom, based on physical delight in varying degrees. This accounts for our change of taste. For, as we grow older we grow more spiritual, less animal and are moved less and less by *crude* beauty, and it requires more and more *refined* beauty to emotion us.

That beauty is absolute is also borne out by this fact that, centuries after their death, when all selfish rivalry of masters and schools had ceased, the vast majority of un-crooked and normal people and critics agree that the four greatest Altarpieces in the World are Raphael’s “Transfiguration,” Titian’s “Assumption,” Rubens’ “Descent from the Cross” and Veronese’s “Martyrdom of St. Justina.” And this verdict will stand for all time—even though a few prefer other altarpieces—just because they are one-sided and honest or many-sided and crooked.



Professor Batchellor said: "Down in the unconscious depths of our soul Music sways the currents of our lives. . . . What does this mean? This universal music, so like a voice speaking out of everything, must have a deep meaning. All nature is a parable! Music in the particles, music in the globes, we see her molding atoms, planets, systems, by her Law—of Harmony."

Paul Gaultier, in speaking of Melody in Art, in his article on "The Meaning of Art" in *Lippincott's Magazine* for June, 1914, page 101, says: "Is not Architecture—which is a *music of Lines*, as music is an architecture of sounds—the symbol and even the work of this law of life (melody) of its innumerable variations, of both its agitation and its calm?"

Sir Frederick Leighton in his "Academy Lectures" says: "Poetry and Music, twin born sisters and long divided, play on a sense of Rhythm and Melody, universal in men. Painting and sculpture appeal to the other sides of our Æsthetic sensibility—the perception of Form and Color, which latter has in its action upon us *much in common with melody*; of proportion, which is to intervals of space what rhythm is to intervals of time and light and shade."

A. J. Eddy, in his "Recollections and Impressions of J. M. Whistler," says: "And, as in sound and color, there is also a *music in line*."

And Baudelaire, who sometimes saw things clearly, said: "We find in color harmony, *melody* and counterpoint." But why quote more?

It is amazing that the idea of the Relativity of Beauty could ever have been so long exploited. The reason is no doubt, first: one man, temperamentally, of two equally beautiful women, will choose the brunette and another the blonde—while admitting that both are supremely beautiful, making the choice simply on the basis of Color; but color is a *secondary* element in all beauty—Line and Pattern being the primary elements; second: Nature has implanted in us a hunger for Variety. Hence we are afflicted with a capacity for Tiring of even the best and most beautiful things, even of our beautiful wives, unless we are ever on our guard to find out what is truly beautiful and, if we possess it, resolve never to lose interest in that thing—even if, through spiritual fatigue and familiarity we should lose our old-time capacity for being highly emotioned by that thing. This love of variety makes many people call a New thing beautiful when it is not so, but only

Novel. A superior Ego always watches and controls the taste of the body, in mind and soul, and takes for its motto: "Hold fast to that which is good!" For such a mind the phrase "familiarity breeds contempt" has only an academic meaning. Did space permit, more facts could be marshaled to prove that Taste is relative but Beauty is absolute.

So I repeat: THE ESSENCE OF ALL BEAUTY WHICH WE PREDICATE OF OBJECTIVE THINGS IN NATURE AND ART, IS—A CERTAIN MELODY, PRODUCED IN US BY THE PATTERNING UPON OUR EYES OF VARIOUSLY COLORED RAYS OF LIGHT, INTERSPERSED WITH VARIOUSLY AGREEABLE PATTERNS OF LINES, THE FOLLOWING OF WHICH, BY OUR EYES, VARIOUSLY STIRS OUR EMOTIONS.

In other words Melody is the Essence of all Beauty. Monotony means ugliness, hence stagnation, depression, melancholy and emptiness of existence. Melody means Beauty, hence agitation, evolution, rapture and fullness of life.

What is true of objective things is true of semi-objective things and of subjective things—there is no beauty without melody.

As for the other elements which enter into the question of "What Is Beauty?" such as color, smoothness, sheen, brilliancy, association of ideas, fitness, use, goodness, etc., they are of secondary importance and would take us too far afield to even touch on here.

A man is a man principally because he always walks and stands on two legs. If now we add to him a fine brain, we make him a better man, and we make him still better by adding a white skin, etc. And so an object is beautiful, primarily, because of its beautiful Pattern of Lines. If now we add beautiful color we make it more beautiful, and by adding a lovely sheen and a noble spiritual thought we make it still more beautiful, etc. But no matter how noble your thought, lovely your sheen and beautiful your color—if you have not a beautiful Pattern—you have no beautiful object.

I have now shown what is the universal *essence* of all Beauty, and answered for the first time since Plato the question Socrates posed to Hippias: "What is the essence of all those things, each diverse from the other, which we call beautiful?"

F. W. Ruckstuhl

